

NVRA AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION IN COLORADO

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Voter registration opportunities for citizens receiving public assistance in Colorado in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)



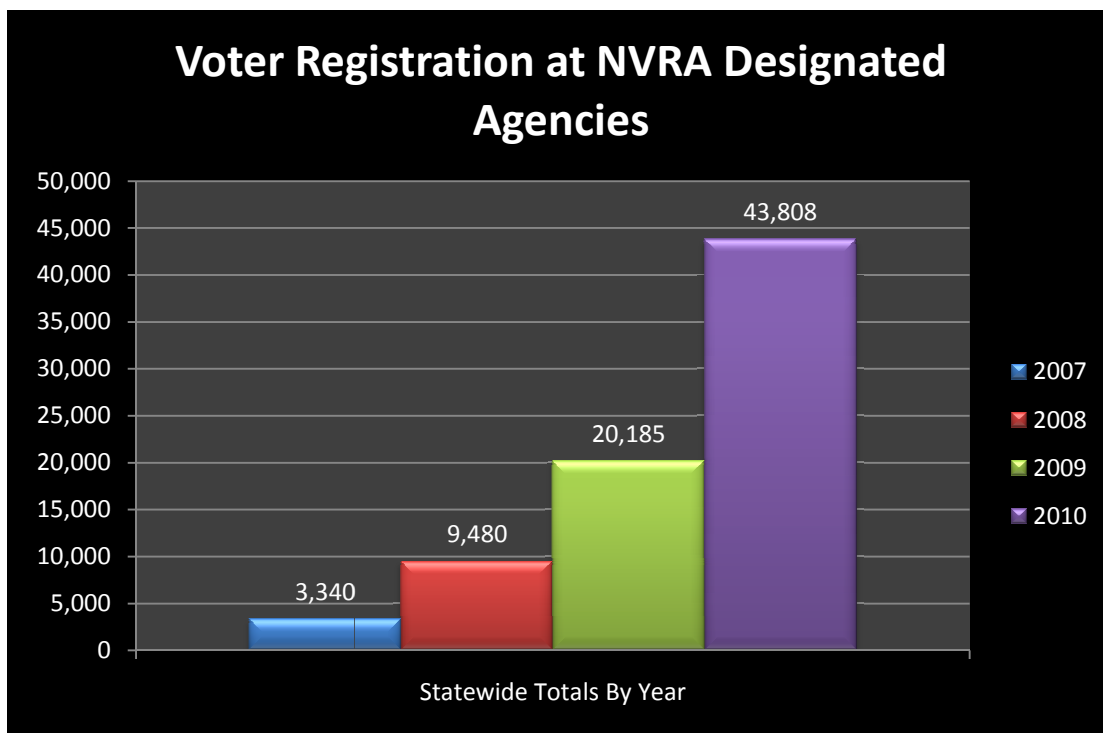
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines procedures implemented in compliance with Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), which requires that states offer voter registration services at agencies providing public assistance.¹ Specifically, the NVRA states that agencies must provide and accept voter registration applications from anyone who applies for public assistance benefits or accommodation services, recertifies or renews benefits or services, or changes address as related to their benefits or services.²

Colorado's successful partnership between the Secretary of State's Office, covered agencies, and Project Vote, a national voter advocacy group, has resulted in improved registration opportunities for voters. Because of Colorado's focus on compliance and ongoing commitment to encourage voter registration, applications generated through public assistance agencies in 2010 increased by 117% from the previous year and have increased more than 1,200% since 2007. In the 2007 calendar year, county clerks reported 3,340 applications for registrations received from agencies covered under the NVRA. In 2010, the number of applications reported was 43,808. Detailed information regarding the number of voter registrations obtained from public assistance agencies and offices providing services to clients with disabilities from 2007 through 2010 is illustrated in Appendix A.



¹ 42 U.S.C. 1973gg-5(a)(1) and (3)

² See 42 U.S.C. 1973gg-5(a)(4)(A) and (a)(6)(A)

COLORADO'S SECTION 7 COMPLIANCE

In the first quarter of 2008, the Secretary of State's office conducted an independent review of available voter registration data. The findings suggested the need for a renewed education and compliance effort. The Secretary of State's office acted promptly to identify key stakeholders and specific areas of non-compliance, and develop a comprehensive plan to mitigate the issues identified. In drafting the plan, the Secretary of State addressed the need for improved communication and coordination with public assistance agencies and the issuance of advice to local agencies regarding their specific duties under the NVRA. The plan also called for the development of training materials and creation of a tracking system to record voter registration statistics with a web-based survey program.

In the fall of 2009 the Secretary of State's office—in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Human Services—began sending voter registration applications in the monthly renewal packets mailed to individuals who receive public assistance from DHS agencies. This action ensured that every applicant for renewal of services who did not appear in person at a local office received an opportunity to register to vote or to update his/her voter registration information. In addition, this centralized mailing approach removed the burden from local DHS offices that were previously required to mail the voter application separately to each potential elector who did not apply in person for renewal. Approximately 20,000 voter registration applications are mailed each month. This mailing supplements, but does not supplant, the opportunity to register to vote when potential applicants apply for or renew services in person.

COLORADO'S NVRA SECTION 7 SUCCESS

Colorado's success in implementing an effective program to improve Section 7 compliance has been enhanced by the partnership between the Secretary of State's office, the Department of Human Services, the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program, and Colorado's publicly-funded colleges and universities. The partnership has resulted in stakeholders working together to increase awareness and improve compliance with Section 7 of the NVRA.

Tracking of agency-based voter registrations was aided by a redesigned voter registration form containing a "source code" that allows the Secretary of State to determine which voter registrations originate from covered agencies. Web-based, monthly reporting by covered agencies also resulted in improved tracking of voter registration numbers.

The Secretary of State implemented online voter registration in April 2010, in accordance with the requirements of Colorado House Bill 09-1160. In 2010, over 100,000 individuals used the GoVoteColorado.com voter registration system to register to vote or to change their voter record. The Secretary of State's office partnered with the Department of Human Services and the Office of Information Technology to begin integration of online voter registration with the Department of Human Service's forthcoming web-based benefit application system, PEAK, which is scheduled to be released in the spring of 2011. Upon implementation of PEAK, applicants will be able to apply for services and register to vote online within the same interface. Statistical information will be tracked in order to monitor the effectiveness of online voter registration at covered agencies.

In an effort to maintain the State's compliance with Section 7, the Secretary of State began outreach to publicly-funded colleges and universities with offices that primarily serve students with disabilities. Following litigation in the state of New York³, the Secretary of State initiated contact with these offices to provide training and

³ *U.S. v. State of New York*, No. 5:04-CV-00428 (NAM/DEP) (N.D. N.Y. March 3, 2010).

information regarding Section 7 compliance. In 2010, the Secretary of State sent forms, posters, and other information to 23 colleges and universities that were not previously offering voter registration in offices serving students with disabilities.

The Secretary of State transitioned the training of agency staff members to a web-based environment. With this new system, training is consistent and easily accessible 24 hours a day, further ensuring that agency staff is aware of their responsibilities regarding section 7 compliance. Online training also provides access to materials in any county in the state at a time that is most convenient for the office seeking training. The Secretary of State continues to provide in-person training to agencies and colleges when requested.

In 2010, the Secretary of State’s office also launched a quarterly newsletter, called *Registration Connections*, to provide an additional avenue of communication to agencies and colleges. Editions of this newsletter have included information on NVRA requirements, election dates, instructions for online form ordering, and other topics relating to NVRA compliance.

Opportunities to Register to Vote at NVRA Agencies in 2010

	In Person, Including CDHS, WIC, Vocational Rehab, and Programs that Serve Students with Disabilities*	Applications Provided for Centrally-Mailed Recertifications **
January	29,264	
February	25,276	
March	24,031	43,000
April	28,771	
May	23,582	35,000
June	24,230	38,000
July	26,867	35,000
August	31,463	
September	27,468	
October	31,569	45,000
November	26,885	
December	27,415	45,000
Total	326,821	241,000

*Numbers of voter registration opportunities with clients seeking services in person, as reported by the covered agency.

**The Department of State provides applications to the Colorado Department of Human Services to be included in recertification packets mailed centrally by the State. Because the exact number of packets needed is not known until mailing is completed, the Secretary of State provides applications in bulk periodically. Stock remaining on hand is retained for use in subsequent mailings by CDHS. As such, orders are not placed each month.

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although tremendous gains have been made in Colorado's compliance with Section 7, there are continuing challenges facing the Secretary of State's office, the Department of Human Services, WIC, colleges and universities, and other public assistance agencies in meeting the needs of potential registrants. Revenue shortfalls and budget cuts resulted in a Governor-mandated hiring freeze and furloughs, limiting the ability of local agencies to take advantage of the resources offered by the Secretary of State. Colorado's local public assistance agencies and colleges are similarly challenged. With increased employee turnover and limited staff and departmental resources, it is difficult for many agencies to not only provide the basic services sought by clients, but to also meet Section 7 compliance.

Despite the challenges faced by WIC, colleges, and the Department of Human Services, the gains that have been achieved in past years in improving voter registration opportunities have been substantial. The statewide voter registration system, known as SCORE, provides a well-developed system of evaluation and tracking for those voter registration applications transmitted from agencies to Colorado's county clerk and recorders. SCORE allows the state to compare the number of applications completed at agencies against the number of applications received by county clerk and recorders to identify and mitigate inconsistencies on an ongoing basis.

A continued relationship with the Office of Information Technology and the Department of Human Services is expected to result in the roll-out of the new, web-based benefit application service known as PEAK. The new online system will direct applicants who wish to register to vote to www.GoVoteColorado.com, thereby allowing applicants to apply to register or update their voter information while applying for benefits. The Secretary of State's office is optimistic that this technology will streamline agency-based voter registration procedures, promote voter convenience, create more accurate data, and reduce the amount of time needed for case managers to assist potential electors with completing voter registration applications. In addition, online voter registration allows applicants to select Spanish language as their preference to complete the application.

Despite the current and future challenges, the Secretary of State's office is committed to enhancement of voter registration opportunities for citizens applying for public assistance or disability services.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the fiscal challenges that Colorado currently is facing, significant improvements in NVRA-mandated voter registration services have been realized. The Secretary of State's office is committed to continuing its positive partnership with the Department of Human Services, WIC, local public assistance agencies, colleges, and other stakeholders in an ongoing effort to improve and maintain compliance with the NVRA.

SECRETARY SCOTT GESSLER'S NVRA TEAM:

Christi Heppard- Special Projects Coordinator

Christi joined the Office of the Secretary of State in 2005 and serves as the Special Projects Coordinator for the Elections Division, a task that includes oversight of NVRA administration and compliance. Prior to joining the Department of State, Christi was the Chief Deputy and Elections Administrator for Teller County, Colorado, where she served for 10 years. Christi may be contacted via email to christi.heppard@sos.state.co.us.

Lisa Doran- NVRA Coordinator

Lisa serves as the NVRA Coordinator for the Office of the Secretary of State and is responsible for communication with covered agencies, collecting statistical data, and ensuring appropriate materials are prepared and distributed. Lisa joined the Department of State in 1999, after serving 13 years with the Arapahoe County Clerk's Office. Lisa may be contacted via email to lisa.doran@sos.state.co.us.

Paris Nelson - Legal Specialist

Paris joined the Office of the Secretary of State in 2009 after earning her juris doctorate from the University of Colorado Law School. Paris serves as the legal specialist for the NVRA program providing legal review and analysis of NVRA administration policies and materials provided to covered agencies. Paris may be contacted via email to paris.nelson@sos.state.co.us.

APPENDIX A

VOTER REGISTRATION TABLE

2007-2010

Data presented in the following table depict information reported by County Clerks and Recorders, as reflected in the statewide voter registration database. While every effort has been made to ensure that accurate data is presented, in some cases data may contain anomalies. Contact the Secretary of State's office for more information about voter registration data.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE VOTER REGISTRATION DATA

Adams – Jefferson Counties

Voter Registration Received From NVRA- Designated Agencies				
County	2007*	2008*	2009	2010
Adams	729	283	1,368	2,858
Alamosa	66	139	82	140
Arapahoe	270	1,797	2,303	6,183
Archuleta	0	2	1	34
Baca	2	85	36	35
Bent	1	4	47	74
Boulder	6	3,575	422	1,401
Broomfield	385	82	152	181
Chaffee	6	11	21	80
Cheyenne	4	2	8	14
Clear Creek	4	4	35	45
Conejos	14	32	17	41
Costilla	16	5	86	70
Crowley	7	81	37	47
Custer	0	2	7	15
Delta	12	74	154	287
Denver	280	21	7,601	12,785
Dolores	0	5	17	47
Douglas	38	28	268	395
Eagle	2	65	199	493
El Paso	14	792	1,844	5,008
Elbert	327	15	73	140
Fremont	51	21	155	539
Garfield	45	18	65	152
Gilpin	0	2	19	38
Grand	0	42	102	43
Gunnison	0	112	41	61
Hinsdale	0	0	8	22
Huerfano	36	92	42	88
Jackson	0	3	7	0
Jefferson	19	87	1,553	5,345

*Prior to 2009, county clerks did not use a centralized voter registration system and self-reported voter registrations statistics.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE VOTER REGISTRATION DATA

Kiowa - Yuma Counties

Voter Registration Received From NVRA- Designated Agencies				
County	2007*	2008*	2009	2010
Kiowa	0	1	0	19
Kit Carson	0	19	4	22
La Plata	4	43	285	474
Lake	3	2	25	63
Larimer	527	462	570	860
Las Animas	0	20	50	114
Lincoln	98	13	50	55
Logan	22	27	139	155
Mesa	0	118	282	749
Moffat	0	64	55	119
Montezuma	0	44	215	262
Montrose	3	18	144	315
Morgan	5	68	111	134
Otero	20	58	33	93
Ouray	0	31	29	24
Park	15	6	47	104
Phillips	85	37	17	42
Pitkin	0	7	17	12
Prowers	29	36	47	49
Pueblo	101	100	210	1,374
Rio Blanco	0	17	13	22
Rio Grande	0	111	97	200
Routt	0	3	39	59
Saguache	3	98	28	105
San Juan	0	0	10	10
San Miguel	76	8	44	26
Sedgwick	9	14	8	9
Summit	0	39	246	182
Teller	0	102	76	108
Washington	5	8	18	16
Weld	0	35	405	1,290
Yuma	1	390	101	77
Statewide Totals By Year	3,340	9,480	20,185	43,808

*Prior to 2009, county clerks did not use a centralized voter registration system and self-reported voter registrations statistics.